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CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/28): Palestinian press report
on Congressional efforts to help Palestinians living in Gaza

Main Stories:

Independent daily Al-Quds reports that 54 Congressmen asked President Obama to pressure Israel to ease the siege imposed on Gaza and allow construction materials into the territory. Al-Quds also reports that 33 Congressmen sent a letter to Secretary Clinton asking her to discuss the Israeli rules that prohibit students living in Gaza from studying at West Bank universities. According to coverage, the State Department responded by reiterating the universal right to an education and said it will respond to the letter in the appropriate way.

Independent daily Al-Ayyam leads with news on yesterday's meeting in Paris with European Foreign Ministers, Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, during which they all pledged to support Prime Minister Fayyad's plan to build the institutions of an independent Palestinian state.

Al-Quds reports that Israel will pump 200,000 liters of fuel into Gaza at Prime Minister Fayyad's request. However, Maan News Agency reports that the Hamas Power Authority and the natural resources department in Gaza denied media reports that this was because of PA intervention.

The dailies report that Special Envoy George Mitchell will be back in the region soon to pursue talks with the Israelis and Palestinians regarding the resumption of negotiations. The coverage notes that Palestinian officials said any US proposal to hold meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators has to be discussed with Arab leaders first.

The dailies report on Hamas' Mahmoud Zahhar noting in a press conference yesterday in Gaza that Hamas will sign the Egyptian plan for national reconciliation if it gets guarantees from Egypt that its concerns were taken into consideration. Zahhar noted that national reconciliation is a strategic choice for Palestinians to be able to oppose Israeli actions.

Al-Ayyam reports on Hamas leader Izzat Rishq noting to Al-Resalah that the prisoner exchange talks between Hamas and Israel are frozen due to Israeli opposition to releasing Hamas leaders as part of the deal.

BLOCK QUOTE:

Adel Abdel Rahman writing in PA official daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadida under the title "Elections are a National Benefit" opines that it is in the interest of all Palestinian factions to end the state of division and achieve unity because Israel has been taking advantage of the division over the past several years. Abdel Rahman urges the factions to make it a national priority to agree on a date for elections.

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